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MORAL AND SOCIAL INTERESTS INVOLVED IN RESTRICTING ORIENTAL IMMIGRATION

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The middle Pacific northwest, so far, has not been invaded by Chinese and Japanese in large numbers, and, except for a brief agitation in 1886, our Portland community has had little share in the passionate oppositions which the advent of these peoples has caused farther south, and to a degree in the British north. This fact might at the outset seem to disqualify us in the present discussion. A Californian can say, with a certain truth, "Your conditions farther north are not as yet attractive to the Oriental. There are with you no exploitations of labor, no such exigencies of harvest times to draw laborers together in masses, and no organizations directly promoting immigration as there are with us. We have decidedly more manufactures and capitalization of irrigated lands. The cry for cheap labor is exigent, and we are therefore confronted with conditions of immigration from the east which appal us. This invasion is supplanting the white population, actually eating us out; and it is accompanied by all manner of moral and social degradations."

But, on the other hand, it appears to many of us that our southern friends by their very nearness to the problem are formidably biased in their judgment. In fact, the imagination of some of their leading writers has run riot. The proximate industrial disturbance and the irregularities of the newcomers are conjured into nightmares of the future Orientalization, not only of the western coast, but of America itself. Perhaps the most marked example of this "stage fright" may be seen in an article which appeared in "Collier's Weekly" some months since and has been widely copied and commented on throughout the entire country. The essay is entitled "Orientophobia," and is from the pen of one of the ablest and sincerest editors of the Californian press, writing from the midst of an area where the Japanese are colonizing most rapidly. It must be granted that the tone of Mr. Rowell's paper is forceful

and rushing—no one who is discussing the question can afford to pass him by. At the first perusal the facts recounted, the fears summoned up, the pessimistic drive and the prophetic warnings of the writer fairly sweep one along, and seem to compel assent. As an example of torrential eloquence, it is almost unequaled. Every subsequent perusal, however, led me to qualify its note and to distrust the author's generalization and conclusions. It dawns upon one that he is proving too much. There may indeed be a world crisis, the greatest since Thermopylae and Salamis, confronting the Pacific coast of America, and no doubt the whole case of the United States with the Negroes of the south, and the ceaseless stream of immigration from Europe, together with the threatenings of Oriental clouds presents a mighty problem; but why may it not be regarded as a challenge to all the higher forces of civilization for some safe and triumphant solution, rather than as a portent and depression? Is it a time for building Chinese walls, and shutting ourselves in as Japan once did, or is it an age of social engineering, for the invention of powers of control, adjustment, and distribution? What is there in the problem to daunt the trained intelligence, the wisest statesmanship and the social enthusiasm of the nation?

For, the one undeniable fact which seems to be emerging is that a certain growing number of Orientals is to be on our shores, partly floating, and partly to stay. It is almost equally certain that exclusion is frankly impossible, deportation impracticable, and the lines of restriction are more and more difficult to define. Others will discuss what may and ought to be done in order to regulate the quantity and quality of the immigration. No doubt careful legislation is necessary both east and west, and in the west, at least, labor immigration should be made the subject of more and more careful treaties and comities with China and Japan. But in the outcome, there will be an accumulation of these peoples, determined to be here by economic principles, and attaching themselves to the soil according to the industrial demands of city and country life. To the present writer it seems a fairly open question whether the ratio of Orientals to the rest of the white population will increase. Except for limited areas, there are with us on this coast no such conditions historically and economically as in the Hawaiian Islands—that is a problem to itself. A few checks and balances added to the present restriction laws ought to suffice for the maintenance of the

present ratio on the basis of the entire coast. At the same time the quality of the immigration might be advanced.

The real problem lies with the hosts rather than the guests; as a problem of resourcefulness, adaptation and character. Shall these immigrants be antagonized, solidified into a caste, driven in upon themselves, compelled by our very treatment of them to herd vilely, and live viciously, or shall there grow up among us in the interest of moral and social sanity a determination to minimize crass-race-prejudice, to dissipate the superstitions and ignorances of both whites and non-whites, and to set up assimilating processes as far as possible along the levels of individual merit and higher efficiencies? Shall we foster the very evil we dread, or shall we somehow foster the germs of good will? Shall our legislation be panicky and steady-by-jerks, or shall it be enlightened and progressive; shall the laws be administered evasively, or evenly, in the interest of peace and progress or of race and class conflict? Do not authors of articles like this "Orientophobia," all unwittingly perhaps, accent the notes of antagonism and invoke passion, mob violence and war with foreign powers, through their insistence upon a theory that race difference and repugnance are irreducible, and through their failure to note the real limits of the problem, or to count up the real resources of a true civilization? When they trumpet for a "white man's frontier," to be maintained if necessary by war and lines of garrisoned fortresses, they are but repeating what helped to foment the riots of the thirties against the Irish, and the opposition of the middle west to the "damned Dutch." In spite of their rude reception, these races, as well as the Scandinavian and other northern races, have been measurably assimilated without any sensible deterioration of the mass; the "hordes" of Southeastern Europe are, if we may trust reliable reports, in a similar process of assimilation, to be delayed, or to be hastened, in the measure that forces of sympathy and education prevail or are withheld.

Even admitting that Orientals are in a different class, what real reason is there for prophesying that they and white races cannot live upon the same soil, use the same language, and in time share each other's mental and social ideals? The process of co-operation will not be difficult when once the alternative course is fairly faced and its consequences fully realized in imagination. For the alternatives are sanguinary and brutalizing. It takes but little imagination

to depict the future if the Chinese and Japanese are given over to mobs, and are refused justice; if they are traduced, denied education and civic rights, if they are treated as animals, and are barred all humanities and amenities. For such abuses, both soon and late, there will be a fearful reckoning. A complete estrangement from us of eastern nations, with all *that* is involved of commercial loss, and the possibility of war, are the least of the evils thus invoked. The greater evil would be visited upon our national character, for in shutting our doors and persecuting inoffensive immigrants, we would have surrendered to mob power, and the mob yielded to always means increasing inhumanity and injustice poured back full measure into the bosoms of those who were their instructors. All the more would such retributions heap up for us, when the chief charge we can bring upon the Oriental, is that, class for class, he is cleaner, thriftier, more industrious, and docile, better bred, better trained, and better mannered than his white neighbor in the world of labor and life.

These views will be called academic, and whoever holds them ought frankly to admit his own limitations. The exclusionist and high restrictionist have the apparent advantage of figures and experience, and can always plead "the present distress." They seem on solid ground when they appeal to the instincts of race purity and of self-preservation. They alone, perhaps, realize the hardships and strains put upon communities and individuals, when the competition of labor seems to drive the better men to the wall. But it must be repeated, those who are mixed up with a problem do not always see the best way out. They cannot understand the need of sacrificing a nearer benefit, to the larger principle. Theirs is the shortsighted view perhaps in this very case, which once drove the Moors out of Spain to the lasting injury of peninsular civilization, which blinded all Southern France in the silk weavers' riots to fight the newly-invented loom; and which united the squireocracy and agricultural laborers of England against the first steam railroads. Economic history is full of such hardships of progress and sufferings of adjustment. The peril is always a great one, that sympathy with those who suffer, may blind rulers and peoples to greater coming good for greater numbers, including it may be even the present sufferers. In the very nature of society, if progressive, there is always a fighting line where the unskilled labor of society is to

be done, and another fighting line where the highest leadership is to be achieved, where the greatest principles of civilization are trying to win out. Over this conflict and friction, the will of the whole people as expressed in good government, in wise legislation, in impartial enforcement of the laws, in enlightened study of conditions should insure civilization against retrogressive steps.

The problem of immigration, especially in the shape in which it is presented to Western America, should be placed in charge of an expert governmental commission of the highest class, with ample powers, capable of patience and detachment from prejudice, in order to formulate all the facts and propose the practicable solution of how the civilization of the west and the east may meet, and how they may mingle—since mingle on some terms they must—with advancing good will and the mutual attainment of material, moral and social good.

This is the challenge that the situation presents to united America. The east as well as the west is concerned in answering it upon the highest lines of national and international harmony. When we ask ourselves what grounds of encouragement there are to hope that an honorable solution will be reached, it needs but to rehearse some of the achievements, over equally stubborn problems lying all about us, and to measure up the new pace which is set for education, for enlightenment, for solidarity of national sentiment, for new evaluations of human lives, and above all for the obligations of society towards its weaker members.

Civic consciousness is growing everywhere. The conviction that material wealth must be harnessed to great uses of state, that culture and knowledge of every kind constitute responsibility and must serve the public, the consciousness that every neglected class or individual endangers the mass and may poison any other individual or class, these are the dynamic truths pushing the imagination, stirring the wills of men. The social conscience which is leading the fortunate to give away so many millions yearly to endow colleges, libraries, hospitals, foundations of research; which creates the Nobel prizes, the Cecil Rhodes bequests, the Russell Sage trust and others is supplemented by state and municipal action in order to give cities nobility, comfort, beauty and wider opportunity. Who would have been bold enough to prophesy, even twenty years ago, that Boston would expend \$20,000,000 in a park system, and Chicago

would provide recreation halls and playgrounds for the common people costing \$10,000,000? Let some of the same conscience and trained intelligence be turned to conditions of immigration, promoting the welfare of the newcomer and providing adequate channels of distribution, let as much be done to make the immigrant more American, as is now doggedly done to keep him un-American, above all let as much be done to defend him from the pirates of sea and land who prey upon his ignorance and helplessness, as is now unhappily left undone—then should we not have a right to hope, at least, that our great problem would turn out a side to the light; and become illumined with human cheer?